



NEWS

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SAVE THE EXCUSES, DESIGNATE A DRIVER

SACRAMENTO, Calif. - The California Highway Patrol (CHP) is benefiting from federal funds to help save lives by nipping drinking and driving in the bud. More than \$1 million in grant funds is being used to fund California's Designated Driver Program through August 2010.

"There's no excuse for operating a motor vehicle after you've been drinking," said CHP Commissioner Joe Farrow. "Not only is it against the law, you're putting your life and the lives of fellow motorists at risk every time you do."

Last year in California, 1,112 people were killed at the hands of an impaired driver. In 2007, another 1,272 victims were killed under similar circumstances.

"While the numbers of DUI fatalities has dropped in recent years, we still have a long way to go with young males," said Christopher Murphy, Director of the California Office of Traffic Safety. "This grant to the CHP gets the message of designating a sober driver right in front of that group."

Last year, according to the Department of Justice, 217,201 people were arrested statewide for driving under the influence (DUI). Among those arrested for DUI in California, roughly 80 percent were male, and 53 percent of the men were between the ages of 21 and 34.

A DUI conviction for a first-time offender could result in jail time, loss of license and fines and penalties of \$13,500 or more.

"The best way to avoid becoming a statistic or spending the night in jail is to be responsible and make a plan ahead of time; designate a non-drinking driver," added Commissioner Farrow.

The Designated Driver Program consists of community education presentations and information booths staffed by CHP officers throughout the state. Funding for the program is provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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